

GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

For Immediate Release
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RAMP METERS TO BE ACTIVATED ON US 78 IN DEKALB

ATLANTA – The Georgia Department of Transportation will sequentially activate eight new ramp meters on US 78 at five interchanges in DeKalb County on Wednesday, January 20, 2010. The westbound meters will be activated during the morning rush hour, starting at 7 a.m., at West Park Place and working towards the west. The eastbound meters will be turned on starting at 4:30 p.m., at North Druid Hills and working eastward.

Ramp meters are turned on just before heavy rush hour traffic begins, and stay on until traffic begins to subside at the end of the peak period. They resemble standard traffic lights, and are installed approximately two-thirds of the way down the entrance ramps. Every 3-5 seconds the meter cycles from red to green, allowing one vehicle at a time to merge onto the freeway. On two-lane ramps, the left and right lanes have alternating green lights, so the left lane goes while the right is stopped, and vice versa.

“We know motorists will spend a little extra time on the ramp, but they should see a decrease in overall travel time on the freeway,” Assistant State Traffic Engineer Mark Demidovich said.

“We’ll monitor these new ramp meters very carefully. If traffic starts to back up on the ramp, sensors will speed up the meters to allow more vehicles to move through. If our cameras show traffic spilling out onto the surface streets, we can turn them off completely.”

Including these eight meters, 148 ramp meters will be operational in metro Atlanta:

- 24 on I-75 between Midtown and Chastain Road
- 8 on I-75 (south side)
- 15 on I-75/85 (Downtown Connector)
- 14 on I-285 (north side)

- 9 on I-285 (northwest)
- 8 on I-285 (southwest)
- 11 on I-285 (east side)
- 11 on I-85 (northeast)
- 8 on I-575
- 27 on I-20 inside I-285
- 5 on GA 400 north of I-285
- 8 on US 78 (east side)

They have collectively reduced average rush-hour commute times in these corridors by significant margins. Georgia DOT engineers have been measuring the before and after conditions on the freeways where ramp meters have been activated. These early studies show between 14 and 39 percent faster trip time averages. Other benefits include reductions in merging accidents and vehicle emissions. The Department will release a complete ramp meter study later this year.

“There will be a short learning curve period in the first few days as the public adjusts,” Demidovich said. “We realize that we may need to tweak specific meters. Please bear with us, and keep in mind that there is no one ‘magic’ solution to eliminate congestion. Ramp meters are just one tool in the toolbox that can help fight it.”

Ramp meters have been used for over 20 years in more than 20 cities across the country. They are placed on entrance ramps to help control the flow of traffic from the surface streets onto the freeway. Without metering, vehicles push their way all at once onto the interstate in a disorderly and potentially dangerous manner. Once these vehicles reach the merge point, they force their way into the travel lanes, causing additional congestion due to stop-and-go merging activity on the freeway. When this happens on already traffic-heavy freeways, there is a total breakdown of free-flow near the on-ramps, which has a ripple effect on traffic for many miles. Even with no stalls or accidents, heavy on-ramp traffic causes congestion that both extends and continues throughout the rush-hour.

The new ramps that will be operational Wednesday, January 20, 2010 are:

- Brockett Road eastbound and westbound
- Hugh Howell Road eastbound and westbound
- Mountain Industrial Boulevard eastbound and westbound
- West Park Place westbound
- North Druid Hills Road eastbound

The Georgia DOT urges travelers to call 511 for updated information about this or any other construction project on interstates and state routes. Georgia 511 is a free phone service that provides real-time traffic and travel information statewide, such as traffic conditions, incidents, lane closures, and delays due to inclement weather. Callers also can transfer to operators to request assistance or report incidents 24 hours a day, seven days a week. More information is available at www.511ga.org.

The Georgia Department of Transportation is committed to providing a safe, seamless and sustainable transportation system that supports Georgia's economy and is sensitive to both its citizens and its environment. For general information on the Georgia DOT, please visit our Web site (www.dot.ga.gov).

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